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MARK OF CHARON
Tony Bedard
Joe Bennett
Jonathan Glapion
Dave McCaig

Far beyond the most distant stars in the sky there exists a separate universe -- a dark dimension of evil and oppression. This chaotic cosmos is ruled by the mighty Negation Empire and its godlike sovereign:

CHARON

Javi Cobian was a doctor on the peaceful world of Larrinaga who led a quiet existence until he was marked by the mysterious Sigil. This strange symbol on his forearm unleashed within him superhuman healing abilities. It also made him the target of Negation operatives who kidnapped Javi for further study.

Javi escaped from the Negation's Prison World along with a group of strangers who had been likewise captured, but his bid for freedom was cut tragically short when he was blasted through the chest by a Negation Lawbringer. His grieving companions buried Javi along with the rest of their dead and they moved on.

Little did they suspect that the Sigil had preserved a spark of life within Javi. Nor could anyone foresee the destructive destiny Charon had in mind for this peace-loving doctor...

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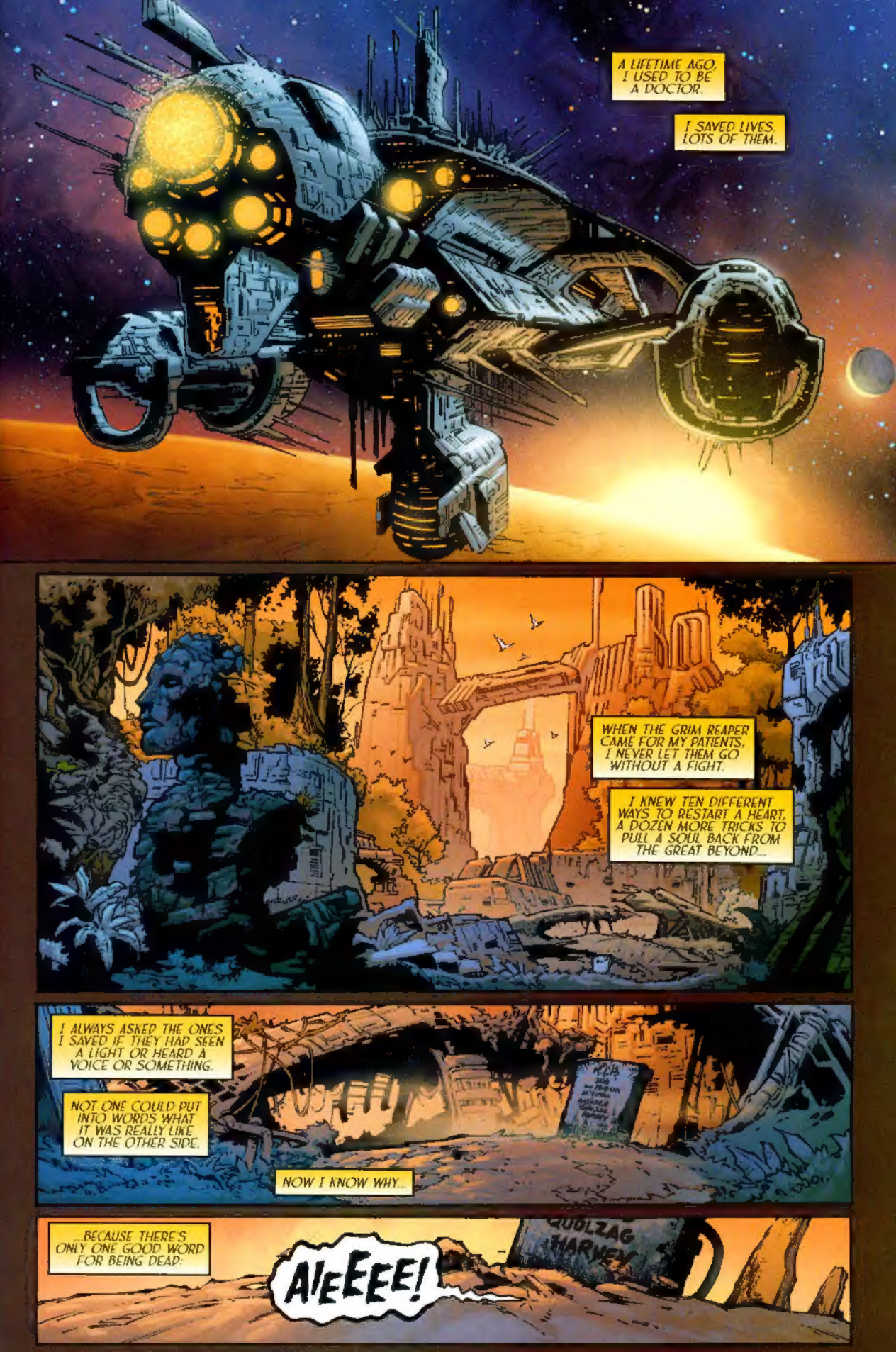
A LIFETIME AGO, I USED TO BE A DOCTOR.
I SAVED LIVES. LOTS OF THEM.
WHEN THE GRIM REAPER CAME FOR MY PATIENTS, I NEVER LET THEM GO WITHOUT A FIGHT.
I KNEW TEN DIFFERENT WAYS TO RESTART A HEART, A DOZEN MORE TRICKS TO PULL A SOUL BACK FROM THE GREAT BEYOND...
I ALWAYS ASKED THE ONES I SAVED IF THEY HAD SEEN A LIGHT OR HEARD A VOICE OR SOMETHING.
NOT ONE COULD PUT INTO WORDS WHAT IT WAS REALLY LIKE ON THE OTHER SIDE.
NOW I KNOW WHY...
...BECAUSE THERE'S ONLY ONE GOOD WORD FOR BEING DEAD:
AIEEEE!

YEAH, I WAS THE EMERGENCY ROOM CHAMP AT CHEATING DEATH.

SO, NATURALLY, WHEN IT CAME TO MY OWN UNTIMELY DEMISE...

...I COULDN'T HAVE HANDLED IT ANY WORSE...

WELCOME BACK, PRISONER JAVI COBIAN.

MY NAME IS CHARON.

I HAVE AN OFFER TO MAKE TO YOU.

Uh! Uh! Uhhh...

!!EEEEE!
R.I.P.
NOW, NOW...CALM DOWN...
AA!!EEE!
...YES, YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT...
...I MAY HAVE UNDERESTIMATED THE DAMAGE TO YOUR *MIND*...
EEEYAHH!
DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR *NAME?* DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU *ARE?*
...nuh... nooo...
YOU ARE *JAVI COBIAN.* MY PEOPLE *TOOK* YOU FROM YOUR HOMEWORLD AND BROUGHT YOU HERE, TO *MY* REALM...TO *THE NEGATION.*

YOU WERE PLACED IN A TESTING FACILITY WITH *OTHERS* TAKEN FROM THE BRIGHT UNIVERSE. YOU WERE THE SUBJECTS OF MY GRAND *EXPERIMENT*.
SOME OF YOU WERE CHOSEN BECAUSE YOU POSSESSED *RARE ABILITIES*.
YOU, FOR INSTANCE, COULD *BOOST* THE NATURAL ENERGIES OF YOUR FELLOW TEST SUBJECTS.
OTHERS AMONG YOU *FEARED* WHAT I WAS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH.
PRISONER *KAINE* CONVINCED YOU TO *ESCAPE* MY TESTING FACILITY...
...BUT FOLLOWING KAINE ONLY BROUGHT YOU *SORROW*.
YOUR GROUP RAN AFOUL OF THOSE WHO *PROTECT* MY REALM...
...AND WHEN *THAT* HAPPENED, YOUR SO-CALLED FRIENDS LET YOU *PERISH*.

ONLY YOU WEREN'T QUITE DEAD...*WERE* YOU?
THAT *SIGIL* ON YOUR ARM PRESERVED THE SPARK OF LIFE WITHIN YOU, IN SPITE OF YOUR MORTAL WOUND.
BUT YOUR FRIENDS COULDN'T WAIT FOR YOUR MIRACULOUS RECOVERY.
THEY *LEFT* YOU BEHIND--BURIED WITH THE *REST* OF THE CAST-OFFS.
I WOULD NOT FORSAKE YOU SO.
YOU *HAVE* SOMETHING THAT INTERESTS ME GREATLY.
IF I'M CORRECT, IT COULD BE A BOON TO *EVERY LIVING SOUL* IN MY REALM.
SS SIGIL...
YES, JAVI. *YOUR* SIGIL IT ELEVATED YOU FROM A CAPABLE DOCTOR TO A TRUE *HEALER*. YOU COULD CURE ANY DISEASE, ANY INJURY, WITH A *TOUCH*.
IMAGINE IF I COULD IMPART SUCH A GIFT TO EVERY SUBJECT IN THE REALM. IMAGINE *EVERYONE* MEETING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, JUST AS *YOU* DID.
THIS IS MY MISSION--TO UPLIFT EVERY SUBJECT IN THE EMPIRE--AND I NEED YOUR HELP.
DECIDE NOW.
SERVE THE NEGATION EMPIRE AND HELP TRILLIONS...
...OR *REMAIN* HERE, ALONE ON A WORLD WHERE INTELLIGENT LIFE IS *EXTINCT*.
NO... NO...
...BAD MAN...*BAD* MAN...
Mm... YOU'RE NOT QUITE *UP* TO THIS YET.

YOUR HEALTH IS STILL DELICATE. SUCH A MOMENTOUS DECISION IS BEYOND YOUR ADDLED FACULTIES...
...ALLOW ME TO CLEAR YOUR MIND...
=GAKK-K=
=UNH=
CHARON...YES... I REMEMBER NOW...
KAINE TOLD US ABOUT YOU. THE NEGATION... THIS ENTIRE UNIVERSE... YOU RULE IT ALL, DON'T YOU..?
YOU'RE THE GOD OF NEGATION...YOU'RE THE GOD OF EVIL...!
Oh, PLEASE. DON'T BE SO MELODRAMATIC.
"EVIL." WHAT DOES THAT EVEN MEAN IN NEGATION SPACE?
LET ME SHOW YOU SOMETHING...

I CALL THEM *SOLAR ANEMONES*. THEY ARE A NATURAL PHENOMENON IN THIS UNIVERSE--LIKE BLACK HOLES WHERE YOU COME FROM.

THEY ONLY DEVOUR *INHABITED* WORLDS. SOMETHING ABOUT LIFE-ENERGY *ATTRACTS* THEM.

THAT'S *TWENTY-SIX BILLION* SENTIENTS ABOUT TO MEET THEIR END.

TELL ME: IS THIS *EVIL*, OR JUST A CRUEL WHIM OF NATURE?

YOU HAVE TO *SAVE* THEM!
ARE YOU ASKING THE "GOD OF EVIL" TO SHOW *MERCY*?
WELL... PERHAPS I'M *NOT* THE VILLAIN YOU'VE BEEN TOLD I AM.
WAS THAT A *GOOD DEED*? WOULD IT NOT BE EVIL TO *OPPOSE* ME?
THIS UNIVERSE WAS ONCE *FILLED* WITH SUCH ANOMALIES. I'VE BROUGHT ORDER AND PEACE TO A DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE COSMOS...
...SO DO YOU THINK YOU CAN SUSPEND JUDGMENT FOR JUST A *LITTLE* WHILE LONGER AND GIVE ME THE BENEFIT OF THE *DOUBT*...?

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE WE WERE AT ONE OF HIS RESEARCH LABS
THEY WERE EXPECTING US
FOR THE GLORY OF CHARON! LET ME BE REBORN!
WELL, AT LEAST THIS ONE HAS SPIRIT. PROCEED.
YES LORD
WATCH AND LEARN, JAVI.
BASELINE SCAN LIGIS CAND DATE ONE SEVEN-FOUR MARK
LET ME BE REBORN!
INITIATING RE SEQUENCER HYBRIDIZATION IN FOUR THREE TWO
ONE!
AAIIEEE!

OPEN THE CHAMBER.
WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?
YOU WERE ONE OF FIVE PRISONERS IN MY TESTING FACILITY WHO BORE THE MARK OF THE SIGIL UPON YOUR BODIES...
...YOU FIVE SIGIL-BEARERS WERE MORE CLOSELY SCANNED AND SCRUTINIZED THAN ANY OTHERS DURING YOUR CAPTIVITY.
WE DETERMINED EARLY ON THAT THE SIGIL REPRESENTS AN UPGRADE TO HUMAN D.N.A.
Gghhurtalleuhh.
--BUT IT ONLY WORKS WITH HUMAN D.N.A.--
THOOM

...HURRLAGGHLE...
OBVIOUSLY, THE NATIVES OF MY REALM ARE *NOT* HUMAN. TO MAKE THEM CANDIDATES FOR A SIGIL OF THEIR OWN, I MUST *INFUSE* THEM WITH HUMAN TISSUE.
THAT IS WHAT THIS DEVICE DOES. ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS SO FAR ARE... *IMPERFECT.*
HE'S LOSING STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY!
aahurrp--*
SPURSH
WHY? WHY DID YOU HAVE TO SHOW ME THIS?
I AM *TELLING* YOU WHY.
"I KNOW THAT YOU RECEIVED YOUR SIGIL WHEN A *STRANGER* TOUCHED YOU. I CAN *SEE* IT IN YOUR *MEMORIES*. IT WAS THE SAME WITH THE OTHERS."
YES. SHE WAS A *NEW* PATIENT SHE HAD ORANGE EYES

I NEVER SAW HER AGAIN
WHO WAS SHE?
WHO PUT THIS THING ON ME?!
I'VE ASKED MYSELF THE SAME QUESTION COUNTLESS TIMES. BUT I STILL HAVE NO IDEA.
THE POWER TO RENDER SUCH A MOLECULAR CHANGE IN YOUR BODY IS NOT A COMMON ONE. IT IS ONLY POSSESSED BY...
...BY PEOPLE LIKE ME.
IF JUST ONE CANDIDATE COULD SURVIVE THE HYBRIDIZATION PROCESS. I KNOW I COULD THEN GIVE THEM THE D.N.A. "UPGRADE" MYSELF.
I COULD BESTOW UPON THIS BRAVE GIRL MY OWN SIGIL. AND UNLOCK POTENTIAL SHE'S NEVER DREAMED SHE HAS.

SO WHY DO YOU NEED ME?
IF YOU CAN REWIRE SOMEONE'S DNA SURELY YOU COULD HEAL THE POOR VICTIMS YOU FEED TO THIS MACHINE
IT'S MORE THAN JUST YOUR ABILITY TO HEAL. I REQUIRE YOUR EXPERIENCE.
YOU HAVE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH THE DIFFICULT ADJUSTMENT OF RECEIVING THE SIGIL AND LEARNING TO USE IT.
I WANT YOU TO GUIDE THESE VOLUNTEERS THROUGH THAT PROCESS -- TO WELCOME THEM TO THEIR NEW LIVES.
THEY VOLUNTEERED ?
BASELINE SCAN LIGIS CANDIDATE ONE-SEVEN-FIVE MARK
ARE YOU READY, MY CHILD?
FOR THE GLORY OF CHARON LET ME BE REBORN
LET ME BE REBORN ?
INITIATING RE-SEQUENCER HYBRIDIZATION IN FOUR, THREE, TWO

ONE!
HHRGGGGLLE...
DAMN YOU, CHARON

IN THAT INSTANT, I KNEW I WAS HIS MAYBE I'D ALREADY LOST THE MOMENT HE FIRST STOOD OVER MY GRAVE
YES CHARON HAD EFFORTLESSLY MADE ME HIS PAWN I NEVER HAD A CHANCE AGAINST HIM MAYBE NO ONE DOES
=HUFF=
=HUFF=
THEN IT DAWNED ON ME THAT HE WAS POTENTIALLY HANDING ME THE MEANS TO FIGHT BACK
PERHAPS ONE DAY EVEN DESTROY HIM

THANK YOU, JAVI. NOW IT'S MY TURN...

SOMETHING NEW AND WONDROUS IS BORN ON THIS DAY!

SOMETHING AS *DIFFERENT* FROM THE MARK ON YOUR ARM AS *THIS* UNIVERSE IS FROM *YOUR OWN*...

FOR IF YOUR ORANGE-EYED STRANGER SEES FIT TO DOLE OUT *SIGILS*, THEN LET THE MARK OF CHARON BE AS A DARK REFLECTION OF THAT SIGN...

BEHOLD, JAVI. THE *INVERSE* SIGIL.

OR SHOULD I CALL IT THE *"LIGIS."*

WHATEVER

CAN I CAN I *REST* NOW ?

I THINK *NOT*. THERE ARE STILL *THREE MORE* CANDIDATES FOR REBIRTH.

"...AND THEN I HAVE A LITTLE *SHAKEDOWN MISSION* IN MIND FOR YOUR NEW TEAM OF *LIGIS-BEARERS*...

YOU *SEE*?! THEY *CAN* BE BEATEN!

SO MUCH FOR THE *MIGHTY NEGATION EMPIRE!*

THEY MAY HAVE *WITHDRAWN*, BUT I DO NOT THINK THEY ARE *BEATEN*

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED WHEN THE HYOOL SYSTEM ATTEMPTED TO REBEL. AFTER A TIME THE EMPEROR GREW TIRED OF OSING TROOPS

SO HE WITHDREW THEM, AND SENT IN SOMETHING *WORSE*

SKZLZL

HORRD

ARE ARE THOSE THE EMPEROR'S *LAWBRINGERS* ?

NO

THEY'RE SOMETHING NEW

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Javi escaped, but his bid for freedom was cut tragically short when he was struck down by a Negation Lawbringer. Brought back from the grave by Charon's power, Javi was reluctantly placed in charge of the Emperor's newest enforcers -- an alien strike team empowered by Charon's own version of the Sigil.

Now Javi leads the vicious Tibian, the mighty Brevus, the telepathic Trocantor, and the teleporter, Shrakti, on a mission to quell a minor rebellion. But Javi's true intent is to somehow turn his powerful allies against the empire they serve, discover the secrets of Charon's past, and ultimately bring down the Negation...

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THERE WAS A TIME WHEN "GOOD" AND "EVIL" STILL MEANT SOMETHING TO ME
SUCH DISTINCTIONS ARE USELESS IN WAR WHERE THE OBJECT IS TO KILL THE OTHER GUY PERIOD
WHAT ARE THEY UP TO, GOBBER? SHOULDN'T WE OPEN FIRE ?
NOT YET, SMOTCH WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY CAN DO.
JUST MAKE SURE SOMEBODY CALLED IN REINFORCEMENTS
FORGET GOOD AND EVIL WHEN YOUR MISSION IS MURDER, TRYING TO SORT OUT RIGHT FROM WRONG WILL MOST LIKELY GET YOU KILLED

ANY GOOD SOLDIER WOULD KNOW THIS, BUT THEN I'M NO SOLDIER

THEY'RE NOT ATTACKING GOOD! IT MIGHT STILL BE POSSIBLE TO RESOLVE THIS *WITHOUT* FIGHTING

AND HOW IS *THAT* SUPPOSED TO SATISFY THE *EMPEROR?*

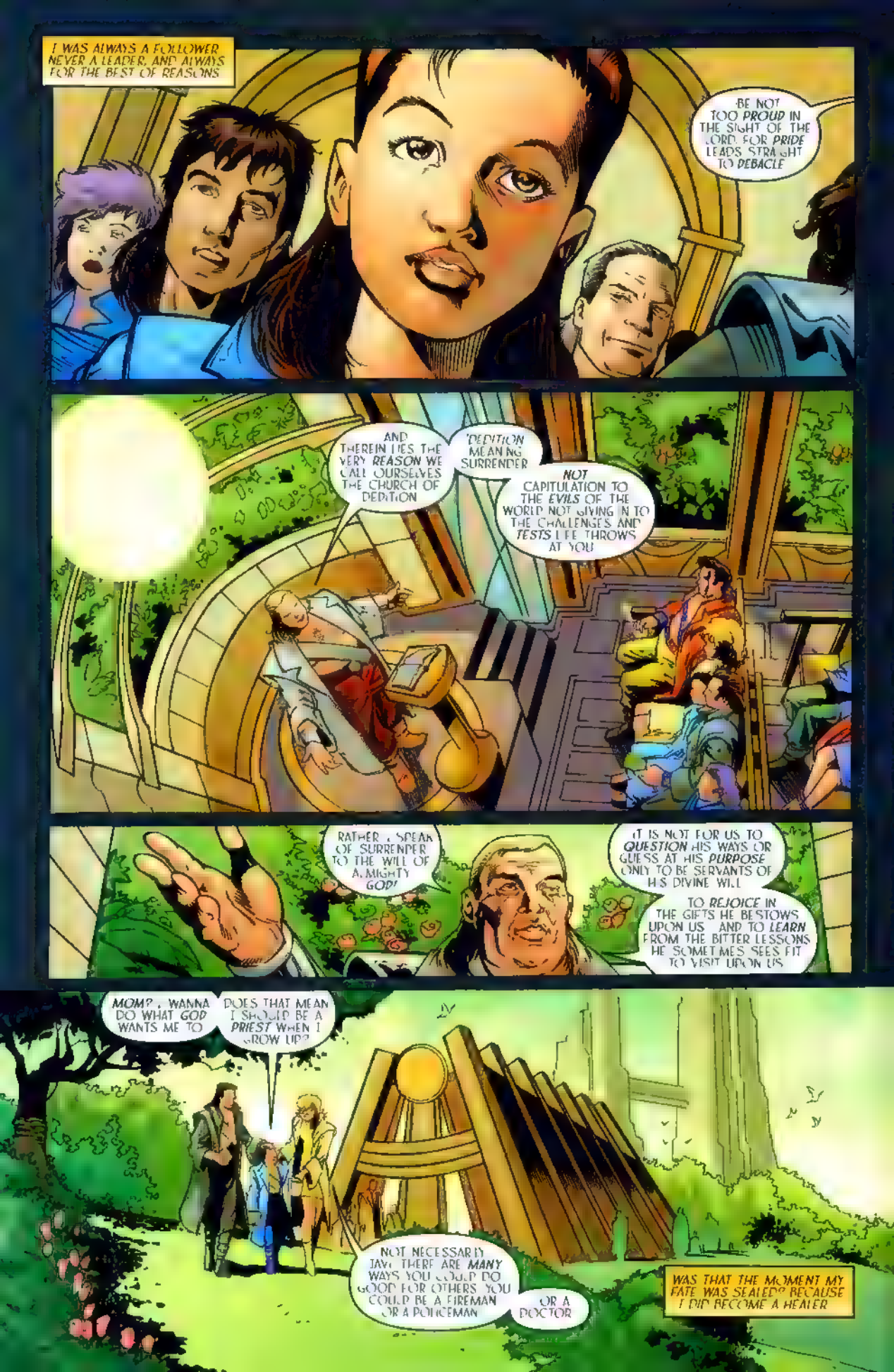
WE'RE HERE TO STOP AN UPRISING, *NOT* TO BUY HIS FAVOR WITH THEIR BLOOD! NOW I NEED YOU TO

FOR THE GLORY OF CHARON!

WAIT! I'M IN COMMAND HERE!

THEN START *COMMANDING!*

WHAT WAS I THINKING? WHAT EVER POSSESSED ME TO THINK I COULD PULL THIS OFF?


I WAS ALWAYS A FOLLOWER NEVER A LEADER, AND ALWAYS FOR THE BEST OF REASONS
BE NOT TOO PROUD IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD. FOR PRIDE LEADS STRAIGHT TO DEBACLE
AND THEREIN LIES THE VERY REASON WE CALL OURSELVES THE CHURCH OF PERDITION
PERDITION MEANING SURRENDER
NOT CAPITULATION TO THE EVILS OF THE WORLD NOT GIVING IN TO THE CHALLENGES AND TESTS LIFE THROWS AT YOU
RATHER, I SPEAK OF SURRENDER TO THE WILL OF A MIGHTY GOD!
IT IS NOT FOR US TO QUESTION HIS WAYS OR GUESS AT HIS PURPOSE ONLY TO BE SERVANTS OF HIS DIVINE WILL
TO REJOICE IN THE GIFTS HE BESTOWS UPON US AND TO LEARN FROM THE BITTER LESSONS HE SOMETIMES SEES FIT TO VISIT UPON US
MOM?, I WANNA DO WHAT GOD WANTS ME TO
DOES THAT MEAN I SHOULD BE A PRIEST WHEN I GROW UP?
NOT NECESSARILY JAY. THERE ARE MANY WAYS YOU COULD DO GOOD FOR OTHERS YOU COULD BE A FIREMAN OR A POLICEMAN
OR A DOCTOR
WAS THAT THE MOMENT MY FATE WAS SEALED? BECAUSE I DID BECOME A HEALER

AND IT WAS MY ABILITY TO HEAL OTHERS THAT MADE ME USEFUL TO THE GOD EMPEROR OF THE NEGATION
CHARON
HE WAS BREEDING HUMAN ALIEN HYBRIDS. A NEW BREED OF WARRIORS TO BE EMPOWERED BY CHARON'S TWISTED VERSION OF THE SIGIL
CAN'T HEAL NO MORE
NO MORE THAT'S ALL I CAN DO
THEN REST. THESE FOUR WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR THE NEXT TASK I SET BEFORE YOU.
YOU WILL LEAD MY NEW SIGIL-BEARERS AGAINST A MINOR REBELLION ON A PLANET CALLED YITBOS.
DON'T YOU HAVE SOLDIERS FOR THAT SORT OF THING?

AS A MATTER OF FACT, GENERAL BIIBURZ IS STANDING BY WITH ORDERS TO *IGNITE* THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE SHOULD *YOU* FAIL IN YOUR MISSION...
...OR SHOULD YOU *DECLINE* IT.
THERE ARE ONE BILLION PEOPLE ON YITBOS. HALF A MILLION OF THEM ARE ACTIVE IN THE UPRISING.
WE FAILED TO CONTAIN THEIR MOVEMENT BEFORE IT WENT GLOBAL. NOW I WANT TO SEE IF YOU FIVE CAN SUCCEED WHERE A BATTALION FAILED.
YOU MAY, OF COURSE, DECLINE. I WILL NOT FORCE YOU TO DO ANYTHING AGAINST YOUR WILL.
NO. YOU'LL JUST *TORCH* ALL THOSE *PEOPLE*
I HAD TO KEEP REMINDING MYSELF WHAT A MIGHTY WEAPON CHARON HAD HANDED ME
ONE THAT MIGHT POSSIBLY BE TURNED UPON ITS MAKER OR ON THE FOOL WHO WIELDS IT
I DON'T KNOW YOU YOU DON'T KNOW ME
THE ONE THING WE *DO* KNOW IS THAT EACH OF YOU OWES ME YOUR *LIFE*
KEEP THAT IN MIND WHEN WE GO DOWN THERE AND KEEP IN MIND THAT YOUR EMPEROR PUT *ME* IN CHARGE

THAT WAS FIVE MINUTES AGO
WHEN I STILL BELIEVED THAT THESE PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEERED AS CHARON'S TEST SUBJECTS WOULD ACTUALLY FOLLOW MY ORDERS
THE SCALY ONE IS NAMED TIBIAN
HIS DARK SIGIL MAKES HIM INHUMANELY QUICK, ELUSIVE AND AGILE
ELEVATING HIS NATURAL DEFENSES INTO WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION
MASS DESTRUCTION ONE THROAT AT A TIME

BREVUS IS THE POWERHOUSE OF THE TEAM
VORP
UNSTOPPABLE AS A RUNAWAY TRAIN

A RUNAWAY TRAIN THAT GETS VERY, VERY ANGRY WHEN YOU SHOOT IT
WHICH IS WHY THEY'LL SURRENDER
I'VE YET TO DETERMINE THE FULL EXTENT OF TROCANTOR'S MENTAL ABILITIES OR SHRAKT'S GIFT FOR TELEPORTATION
THEN LET'S GET TO IT BEFORE WE MISS OUR CHANCE!
VORP
SHRAKT, NO!
DAMN!
VIP

VORP

VIP

VIP

VIP

VORP

GET BACK HERE NOW!
MY ORDERS FELL ON DEAF EARS. THEY ALREADY HAD ALL THEY NEEDED FROM ME.
I WOULDN'T HAVE SAVED THEM IF I'D KNOWN THEY'D JUST TAKE THE LIVES OF OTHERS.
IF ONLY I COULD TAKE BACK THAT MISTAKE.
I HAD TO TRY.
ALL I EVER DID WAS GIVE AND GIVE. NOW IT WAS TIME TO TAKE.
WITHIN EACH OF THEM COURSED ENERGIES THAT I HAD INCREASED FROM A TRICKLE TO A DELUGE.
SO I REACHED OUT.
AND CALLED BACK THE TORRENT!

=UNGH=
WHAT WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?
KRRLNK
=HURK=

I GAVE YOU POWER! I CAN WITHHOLD IT AS WELL!
IF YOU WANT IT BACK, YOU WILL FOLLOW MY ORDERS TO THE LETTER! UNDERSTOOD?
WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT?! THEY'LL KILL US!
NO THEY WILL NOT!
TROCANTOR, SEIZE EVERY REBEL MIND OUT THERE
NOW YOU CAN

KLAK
THUNK
KLATTER
I'M GOING TO RELEASE YOU NOW Sigil BEARERS!
WHAT YOU DO NEXT WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT YOU CONTINUE TO SERVE YOUR EMPEROR!

KLUNK
HRAHH!
GOOD

NOW, I REALIZE THAT EACH OF YOU VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS DUTY. THIS TRANSFORMATION. BECAUSE OF YOUR DEVOTION TO CHARON
THE ALMIGHTY
THE LIVING GOD
HE WILL KNOW IF WE'RE NOT WORTHY
IF YOU RESPECT HIM, THEN RESPECT HIS DECISION TO PLACE ME IN CHARGE OF THIS TEAM
QUESTION MY COMMANDS, AND YOU QUESTION HIS JUDGMENT!
I SAY THESE PEOPLE WILL BE SPARED. THE PEOPLE OF NEGATION WILL LEARN THE MEANING OF MERCY
SACRILEGE!
YOU WOULD EQUATE THE LORD'S JUDGMENT WITH YOUR OWN!
I NEVER WANTED ANY OF THIS

ALL I EVER WANTED WAS TO BE THE MAN GOD WANTED ME TO BE. HUMBLE, HARD WORKING, DEDICATED TO THOSE LESS FORTUNATE THAN MYSELF

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I ACTUALLY THOUGHT I'D ACHIEVED THAT GOAL

JAVI! I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU

TAKE VERY GOOD CARE OF THESE. IT IS AN HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE TO WEAR *DOCTOR'S GAUNTLETS*

NOW AL, I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT IS MY *STUDENT LOAN*

YEAH, I'M STIL PAY NG OFF MINE

AT LEAST YOU'LL NEVER LACK WORK THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF DISEASE, PAIN AND MISERY IN THIS LIFE

ANSWER ME! DO YOU THINK YOURSELF SO *EXALTED* BY MY FATHER?

I I

LAWBRINGERS.

OUR *NEXT* TEST...?

NO THERE WILL BE *NO MORE* FIGHTING HERE TODAY

WHETHER OR NOT YOU RESIST US, IT WILL MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE IN THE END. BUT IT WILL GO EASIER FOR YOU IF YOU SATISFY OUR... CURIOSITY.
YES! TELL US WHAT PURPOSE FATHER COULD POSSIBLY HAVE FOR CREATING SUCH... ABOMINATIONS AS YOU.
OUR BROTHER QZTR SAYS FATHER HAS SET MANY GREAT PLANS IN MOTION. WHY DOES HE NOT INCLUDE US...?
DOES HE MEAN FOR YOU SOFT THINGS TO REPLACE US?

SO, JAVI
WHAT IF I AM FORCED TO KILL ONE OF THESE THINGS IN SELF DEFENSE?
BAD DEAL. EVEN ONE OF THESE DAWBRINGERS IS AS POWERFUL AS THE ONE THAT KILLED ME. WE DON'T STAND A CHANCE AGAINST THEM
NOT TODAY
BESIDES, THERE'S NO NEED FOR US TO LIFT A FINGER AGAINST THEM THE FACT THAT WE'RE HERE AT ALL MEANS THEIR TIME IS AT AN END
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
FROM WHAT I KNOW OF YOUR ORIGINS, YOU DAWBRINGERS WERE JUST A ROUGH DRAFT- AN EXPLORATORY PROCEDURE
WE ARE THE FINAL CURE FOR WHAT AILS THE EMPIRE. I MEAN, WHY APPLY LEECHES WHEN YOU HAVE ANTIBIOTICS?

AND WHAT ABOUT OUR BIRTH TELLS YOU WE ARE OBSOLETE?
TELL YOU WHAT LET'S COMPARE NOTES, AND WE'LL SEE IF I'M RIGHT
YOU SEE, GENTLEMEN? OUR FAITH IN THIS ONE IS NOT MISPLACED...

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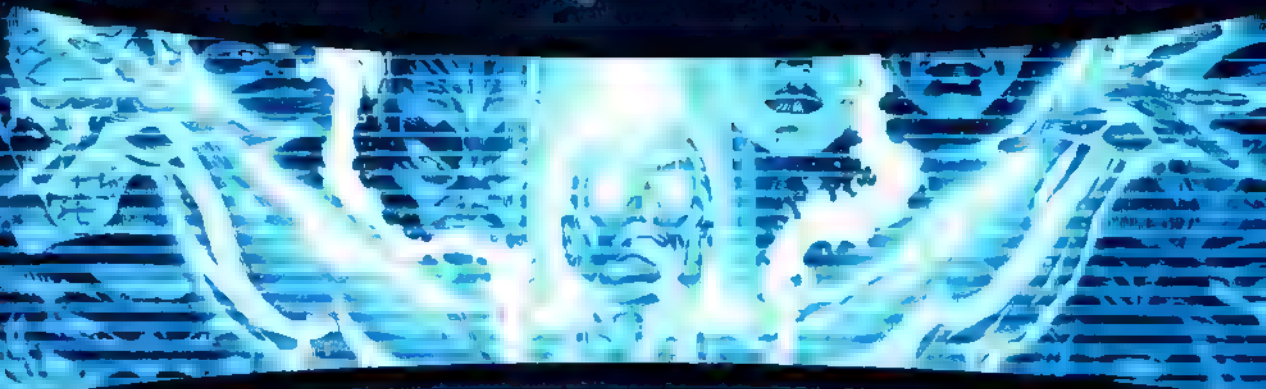

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Far beyond the most distant stars in the sky there exists a separate universe -- a dark dimension of evil and oppression. This chaotic cosmos is ruled by the mighty Negation Empire and its godlike sovereign:

CHARON

Javi Cobian was a doctor on a peaceful world who led a quiet existence until he was marked by the mysterious Sigil. This strange symbol on his forearm unleashed within him superhuman healing abilities... *and* it made him the target of Negation operatives who kidnapped Javi for further study.

Javi escaped, but his bid for freedom was cut tragically short when he was struck down by a Negation Lawbringer. Brought back from the grave by Charon's power, Javi was reluctantly placed in charge of the Emperor's newest enforcers -- an alien strike team empowered by Charon's own version of the Sigil.

Commanding the vicious Tibian, the mighty Brevus, the telepathic Trocantor, and the teleporter, Shrakti, Javi confronts three Lawbringers who are keen to find out what Charon means by creating these new warriors. Can he somehow turn this imminent clash to his advantage and turn the tables on the Lord of the Negation?

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SO THERE I WAS, TRICKING A CREATURE THAT CAN PULL A PLANET APART INTO TELLING ME ITS DEEPEST, DARKEST SECRETS.

YOUR MARKING IS *NOT* OF THIS REALM. *THEY* BEAR THE MARK OF *CHARON!* WHY?!

WHY DID FATHER MARK THEM WITH *HIS* SIGN?

I CAN... *SMELL* HIS TOUCH UPON YOU *ALL!*

I HAD FACED A LAWBRINGER BEFORE. IT KILLED ME WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT

...AND THEY JEALOUSLY GUARD THEIR PLACE AT THE TOP OF THE NEGATION PECKING ORDER

MY TEAM AND I MIGHT RIVAL THEIR POWER ONE DAY BUT NOT YET

WHAT LITTLE I KNEW ABOUT THIS RACE OF NIGHTMARES IS THAT THEY CALL THE NEGATION EMPEROR THEIR "FATHER"

SO WHEN THESE THREE LAWBRINGERS CONFRONTED US ON OUR FIRST MISSION, I BLUFFED THAT I KNEW A SECRET ABOUT THEIR PAST

IT WAS ALL I COULD COME UP WITH TO FORESTALL OUR SUMMARY EXECUTION

WELL...? WHAT DOES FATHER *INTEND* FOR SUCH AS YOU?

I JUST HAD TO KEEP THEM TALKING--PLAY FOR TIME

-WHUNG-

IF I COULD JUST GET THEM TO REVEAL SOMETHING, ANYTHING, THAT I COULD USE AGAINST THEM

CAN'T YOU *SEE* THE WRITING ON THE WALL? WE'RE YOUR *REPLACEMENTS*

WHY WOULD FATHER REPLACE *US* WITH *YOU*?

BECAUSE WE'RE *EASIER* ON THE EYES ?

DO NOT *MOCK* US! WE WERE BIRTHED OF CHARON, AND CHARON *ALONE!*

DID SHE MEAN THAT CHARON CREATED THEM? OR WERE THEY SOME KIND OF IMMACULATE MISCONCEPTION?

WE ARE THE *CHILDREN* OF CHARON--HIS PRINCES AND HEIRS

YOU ARE NOT OUR *EQUALS*, MUCH LESS OUR *SUCCESSORS!*

IF YOU'RE SO PERFECT THEN WHY DOES HE NEED AN ARMY TO ENFORCE HIS WILL?

YOU UNDERSTAND SO LITTLE, YET INFURIATE SO MUCH!

MAYBE WE WILL LET YOU LIVE. MAYBE NOT. EITHER WAY, YOU WILL REVEAL WHAT YOU CLAIM TO KNOW ABOUT US!

TELEPATH! LINK HIS MIND WITH MY SISTER'S!

ORYN! FIND OUT WHAT HE KNOWS!

NO, WAIT A MINUTE--

NOW!

I WANTED ANSWERS, BUT NOT LIKE THIS.

I CAN'T EXPLAIN HOW VILE IT WAS TO TOUCH MINDS WITH LAWBRINGER ORYN. TO FEEL HER DELIGHT IN SUFFERING AND DEATH

HER THOUGHTS WERE A STORM OF WHITE HOT EMOTIONS RUNNING THE GAMUT FROM FURY TO HATRED

SHE WAS RUMMAGING THROUGH MY MEMORIES, SEARCHING IN VAIN FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE LAWBRINGERS WHICH I DIDN'T ACTUALLY HAVE

ALL THE WHILE, I SAW LAWBRINGER ORYN'S OWN MEMORIES OF A TIME WHEN THE NEGATION WAS NEWLY FORMING

A RACE OF DARK DEMIGODS, THE LAWBRINGERS WERE CHARON'S ORIGINAL ARMY

THEY SCATTERED TO THE FAR-FLUNG CORNERS OF THE UNIVERSE, DEMANDING FEALTY TO THE GOD EMPEROR FROM EVERY WORLD THEY ENCOUNTERED

THE PEOPLES THEY CONQUERED NEVER DREAMED THIS DAY WOULD COME

SOME RESISTED. SOME FOUGHT BACK WITH EVERYTHING THEY HAD AGAINST THIS LONE VISITOR FROM THE STARS, THIS "LAWBRINGER"

THOSE WERE THE ONES THAT PERISHED

THE SMART ONES CAPITULATED

THUS WAS THE NEGATION EMPIRE WAS BORN

WHAT HAVE YOU *FOUND*, QRYN?! WHAT DOES HE *KNOW*?!

STOP GET *OUT*

TROCANTOR

MAINTAIN LINK

NEED MORE TIME

AS THE FIRST CONQUEST CONTINUED, THE LAWBRINGERS' EXCESSES SPUN OUT OF CONTROL

FOR EVERY WORLD THEY BROUGHT UNDER NEGATION CONTROL, IT SEEMED ANOTHER WAS DESTROYED FOR EVEN THE MOST TOKEN GESTURE OF RESISTANCE.

IN TIME, CHARON REALIZED THAT HIS SOLITARY ENFORCERS LACKED THE SUBTLETY TO GOVERN

THEY PLACED NO VALUE ON LIFE ITSELF

IT WAS NEVER THE GOD-EMPEROR'S INTENTION TO RULE A KINGDOM OF CORPSES.

SO THE LAWBRINGERS WERE PROMOTED OUT OF THE WAY THEY BECAME WEAPONS OF LAST RESORT

THEY BECAME THE DREADED EXECUTIONERS OF FINAL JUDGMENT WHEN THE NEW NEGATION MILITARY COULD NOT QUELL A WORLD

WHICH WAS NOT OFTEN

THAT'S *ENOUGH*, TROCANTOR! CAN'T YOU SEE IT'S *KILLING* HIM?!

GAHH!

=UNGH=

I ONLY HOPE WE'RE NOT *TOO* *LATE*

TH.S IS *RIDICULOUS!*

I'M NOT GOING TO STAND BY AND *WATCH* AS THEY KILL US *ONE* *BY ONE!*

THIAN WAIT!

I UNDERSTAND NOW

WE DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT THEM WE HAVE TO HELP THEM

YOU HAVE *NOTHING* TO OFFER US! YOU *LIED* THAT YOU KNEW OF OUR *CREATION*—

YES BUT *YOU* DON'T KNOW E THER *THAT'S* WHAT I REAL ZED WHEN OUR MINDS LINKED UP

NONE OF YOU CAN REMEMBER *HOW* CHARON MADE YOU. *DO* YOU?! SOMETH NG S *BLOCKING* THAT MEMORY!

YOU WANT TO *FIND OUT* HOW YOU WERE BORN? I CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!

HOW?

THIS THING THE SIGIL

CHARON REPLICATED IT BECAUSE IT ALLOWS ORDINARY PEOPLE TO DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS

MINE LETS ME BOOST THE ABILITIES OF OTHERS. STRENGTH HEALING ENERGY-POWERS YOU NAME IT!

TROCANTOR'S SIGIL MAKES HIM A MIND READER OBVIOUSLY

I'LL BET THAT WITH ME BOOSTING HIS POWER, WE CAN BREAK THROUGH YOUR MENTAL BLOCK AND GET TO THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR PAST

JAVI NOT AGAIN--! I THOUGHT YOUR HEAD WAS GOING TO EXPLODE THE LAST TIME!

I THINK IF WE ALL PARTICIPATE AND WE TAKE IT VERY SLOW WE CAN AVOID A LOT OF THE PSYCHIC FEEDBACK, I GUESS YOU'D CALL IT

THIS HAD BETTER NOT BE A TRICK

WHAT ARE WE SEEING?

TEN THOUSAND YEARS AGO, NOT LONG AFTER FATHER ARRIVED IN NEGATION SPACE.

WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS FLYING OUT OF HIM?

CAN'T YOU FEEL IT? THEY'RE LAWBRINGERS.

YES! THEY'RE BEING BORN.

WHO IS THAT WITH CHARON?

FATHER'S ADVERSARY... ONCE HIS COLLABORATOR. WE NO LONGER SPEAK HIS NAME...

CHARON!

UHH...

WHAT... HAVE YOU DONE?

ANSWER ME!

I HAVE... PURGED MYSELF, APOLYON... ...CAST OUT THE MADNESS THAT KEPT ME FROM SAVING THE UNIVERSE FROM ITSELF.

I HAVE TURNED ALL THE *RAGE* AND *DOUBT* AND *CONFLICT* THAT CRIPPLED MY MIND INTO SOMETHING *USEFUL*.

THEY WERE A PART OF *ME*. NOW THEY SHALL BE MY *SOLDIERS*. AND THEY WILL BRING *ORDER* TO THE CHAOS.

NOT THIS *AGAIN*! YOU CAN'T *FORCE* THE UNIVERSE TO BEHAVE BY *YOUR* LAWS!

YOU'LL SEE, APPOLYON.

RISE, MY LAWBRINGERS! THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE!

NO!

SKRAKT

WE ALWAYS KNEW THIS DAY WOULD COME.

I WILL MISS YOU.

MY MIND RACED TO KEEP UP WITH WHAT WAS UNFOLDING ONE PLAYER IN THIS COSMIC DRAMA CAUGHT MY EYE MORE THAN THE OTHERS

CHARON HAD CALLED HIM APPOLYON

ONCE, HE WAS VERY NEARLY CHARON'S EQUAL

NOW HE WAS SIMPLY RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE

THE SEARCH FOR APPOLYON LASTED A LONG TIME--MAYBE A YEAR, MAYBE A HUNDRED

THE LAWBRINGERS SPREAD OUT ACROSS THE UNIVERSE, LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED IN THEIR QUEST TO CAPTURE THEIR FATHER'S ARCHENEMY

APPOLYON ALTERED HIMSELF TO BETTER EVADE HIS PURSUERS

HE HID IN ASTEROID BELTS, AT THE BOTTOMS OF OCEANS, IN CITIES AND IN SOLITUDE

WHEREVER HE WENT, A LAWBRINGER WOULD EVENTUALLY FIND HIM

STILL APPOLYON MUST HAVE KNOWN THAT IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE HIS LUCK RAN OUT

USUALLY THAT LAWBRINGER DIDN'T SURVIVE THE ENCOUNTER ONE ON ONE EVEN THEY WEREN'T POWERFUL ENOUGH TO BRING HIM DOWN

FINALLY HE RETURNED TO THE PLANET WHERE HE AND CHARON HAD FIRST ARRIVED IN NEGATION SPACE AND BEFRIENDED ONE OF THE LOCALS.

MEROH! IS IT YOU...?

OH, MY FRIEND...YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN UNDERSTAND...

THIS TIME IT WAS CHARON HIMSELF WHO CAUGHT UP WITH APPOLYON

COME TO FINISH THE JOB IN PERSON, eh? TIRED OF SACRIFICING YOUR FREAKS AGAINST ME?

THE OUTCOME OF THEIR FINAL BATTLE WAS NEVER IN DOUBT

THE ONLY SURPRISE WAS THAT CHARON DIDN'T KILL HIS FOE

INSTEAD, HE BANISHED HIM FOREVER TO A PLACE OF TORMENT

AGH=

=GAH=

UH--!

I SURE HOPE THAT WAS *WORTH* THE PAIN =SNFF=

THAT *LAST* BIT CHARON CAST APPOLYON THROUGH A *DIMENSIONAL GATE*

A LOT LIKE THE KIND *YOU* PROJECT !

DID YOU *FEEL* IT, SHRAKTI? CAN YOU OPEN A *PORTAL* TO WHEREVER T WAS THAT HE BANISHED APPOLYON?

I I'M NOT SURE

FWASH

IT IS AN EXTRADIMENSIONAL PLANE, A *PART* OF OUR UNIVERSE, AND YET FOREVER *SEPARATE*. YOU ARE FREE TO GO THERE, IF YOU WISH.

UH TH THANKS

WHY SO *HELPFUL* A.L OF A SUDDEN ?

YOU GAVE US A *GREAT GIFT* TODAY. YOU *REMINDED* US THAT WE ARE *ONE* WITH THE FATHER. WE ARE FLESH OF *HIS* FLESH.

YOU LET US SEE THIS WITH OUR *OWN* EYES FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MILLENNIA.

IS *THAT* WHAT YOU THREE GOT OUT OF OUR *GROUP THERAPY* SESSION ?

DID IT COMPLETELY *ESCAPE YOU* THAT YOUR ABSENTEE FATHER *GAVE UP* ON YOU ONCE AND HE'S ABOUT TO DO SO *AGAIN* ?

WHEN CHARON *SPAT YOU OUT*, HE WASN'T LETTING GO OF WHAT'S *BEST* IN HIM. HE WAS *EXCRETING* HIS VERY WORST QUALITIES

I'M SORRY BUT YOU'RE *NOT* HIS PRECIOUS OFFSPRING YOU'RE HIS *WASTE PRODUCT*

MADNESS AND RAGE. PETTINESS AND SPITE. *THAT'S* WHAT HE MADE YOU FROM!

EMOTIONAL *TOXIC SLUDGE*

YOU ARE HIS SINS AND IMPERFECTIONS

YOU ARE HIS *FAILINGS*

YOU ARE CHARON'S *INSANITY*, GIVEN A LIFE OF ITS OWN

YOU *ASKED* WHY HE'D *REPLACE* YOU WITH *US*?

HEY. WE MAY NOT BE *PERFECT*, BUT AT LEAST WE'RE *SANE*

VIP

CAN SOMEONE *EXPLAIN* TO ME WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

WHAT *HAPPENED* IS THAT I GOT THOSE MONSTERS TO POINT US TO THE *ONLY BEING* WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY KNOW HOW TO *FREE* EVERY SOUL ENSLAVED BY THE NEGATION

COME AGAIN?

APPOLYON HE WAS *BANISHED* HERE IF HE'S STILL AROUND HE CAN TELL US *WHO* YOUR GOD EMPEROR REALLY *IS*

AND MAYBE HE CAN TELL US HOW TO *BRING HIM DOWN*

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Tony Bedard
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MOST OF MY FRIENDS STOPPED GOING TO CHURCH YEARS BEFORE I EVER HAD A CRISIS OF FAITH

BUT WHEN IT FINALLY CAME I MADE UP FOR LOST TIME

DOCTOR COBIAN *JAVI* YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU *COULD*

NO! DON'T START WITH THAT *SURRENDER* CRAP!

YOU'VE BEEN CHAPLAIN AT THIS HOSPITAL FOR *TWENTY CYCLES!* WHEN WILL YOU REALIZE THAT WE *CAN'T* SURRENDER IN THIS LINE OF WORK?!

AT TIMES LIKE THIS, WE MUST REMEMBER *WHY* WE SURRENDER TO THE WILL OF GOD IT IS *SHE*, NOT US, WHO CHOOSES THE HOUR OF OUR *DEATH*

YOU GIVE UP, AND THE WORST THAT HAPPENS IS YOUR SERMON'S A LITTLE EXTRA BORING THAT DAY! I GIVE UP AND SOMEBODY *DIES!*

EITHER WAY, I SERIOUSLY DOUBT GOD EVEN *CARES!*

HOW *DARE* YOU--!

AND I DESERVED IT. IT WASN'T FATHER CHUY'S FAULT THAT I'D LOST THREE PATIENTS THAT WEEK. STILL, I NEVER WENT BACK TO CHURCH--

--DESPITE MY MOTHER'S REPEATED WARNINGS THAT IF I DIDN'T MAKE AMENDS WITH GOD

ONE DAY I'D END UP IN HELL

TRAITOR!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY SAYING YOU WANT TO BRING DOWN CHARON?

AND WHY SHOULD WE SIDE WITH YOU?

ONE, BECAUSE YOUR ALMIGHTY EMPEROR IS NOT WHO YOU THINK HE IS. AND TWO

BECAUSE WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!

SKREEE!

HELLP!

SHRAKT! PORT THEM BACK THIS WAY!

OKAY

TIBIAN! YOU STILL WANT TO *HIT* SOMETHING?

BRING THEM OUT RIGHT IN *FRONT* OF ME SHRAKT!

VORP

?

SKREEE—EVIP!

EEEEEEEE?!

C'MERE!

VOOP

WHUNG

OOF!

FOR THE GLORY OF CHARON!

REGROUP! ON ME NOW!

CIRCLE IT UP AND WATCH FOR MORE OF THEM!

THAT MEANS YOU, T'BIAN!

HRARRH!

I'M GETTING SICK OF YOU BOSSING US AROUND!

GET USED TO IT. I LEAD THIS TEAM!

FORGET YOUR TEAM! I ANSWER ONLY TO THE EMPEROR!

TOO BAD YOU ALL WERE JUST STARTING TO FIND YOUR RHYTHM

WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?

DON'T BE AFRAID. I WON'T HURT YOU

WE'RE NOT THE ONES WHO SHOULD BE AFRAID, STRANGER!

TIBIAN! BREVUS! STAND DOWN!

MY NAME IS JAVI. THIS IS TIBIAN, BREVUS, TROCANTOR AND SHRAKTI

WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE CALLED APPOLYON

I KNOW

YOU WANT THE LOWDOWN ON BIG BLUE, RIGHT? Y'KNOW THE GUY WHO TATTOOED THESE THINGS ON YOU?

BY THE WAY DID IT HURT ?

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHY WE'RE HERE?

BECAUSE I'VE COME TO *ESCORT* YOU TO APPOLYON IF YOU'LL *LET* ME

SEEMS A BIT TOO *CONVENIENT*

TRUE

THEN AGAIN, WE HAVE NO OTHER *LEADS*

INFERNO ?

HADES ?

AITCH-EE-DOUBLE *HOCKEYSTICKS?*

Um YES I THINK

COME ALONG

SO, WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE? BECAUSE IT LOOKS AN AWFUL LOT LIKE--

WE'RE ON AN EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL PLANE--A *SUBSTRATUM* OF THE UNIVERSE CURRENTLY RULED BY THE BOSS' FORMER *PARTNER*, CHARON

Y'KNOW "BIG BLUE"

SO WE'RE NO LONGER IN THE NEGATION UNIVERSE AT ALL?

WELL, YES *AND* NO

SEE, MOST PEOPLE THINK THAT IF YOU ADD UP ALL THE STARS AND PLANETS AND GALAXIES, *THAT'S* THE UNIVERSE BUT THERE'S *MORE* TO THE OL' COSMOS THAN THAT

THERE ARE ALSO VIBRATIONAL PLANES ENTIRE REALMS EXISTING ALONGSIDE, YET JUST OUT OF PHASE WITH, PRIMARY SPACE TIME

THIS IS *ONE* SUCH "*POCKET UNIVERSE*," IF YOU WILL

IT AIN'T MUCH BUT IT'S *HOME*

I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE WHO *TALKS* QUITE LIKE YOU

YOU HAVE NO IDEA

SO, HOW *FAR* TO THIS APPOLYON FELLOW?

AS A MATTER OF FACT

WE'RE ALREADY HERE!

HOW DID HE DO THAT?

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

COME ON IN, FOLKS! "ABANDON ALL HOPE" AND ALL THAT

THERE

NOW, WHAT CAN I DO YOU FOR?

SO WHERE IS APPOLYON?

HANG ON A SEC

WAIT JUST A *MINUTE* I HOPE FOR YOUR SAKE YOU'RE NOT SUGGESTING THAT *YOU* ARE APPOLYON

BECAUSE THE BEING WE'RE LOOKING FOR HAS

--WINGS?

GLOWS A LOVELY SHADE OF *VIOLET*?

IS *INFINITELY* MORE POWERFUL THAN ANY ONE OF US IN HERE?

I CAN LOOK LIKE ALMOST *ANYTHING*, BUT IF THIS IS WHAT YOU NEED TO BE CONVINCED...

STEADY, PEOPLE

LORD APPOLYON I'M SORRY

WE MEANT NO DISRESPECT

AND WE DID NOT COME HERE LOOKING FOR A *FIGHT*

I ALREADY *KNOW* THAT! IF YOU HAD, YOU'D NEVER'VE KNOWN WHAT *HIT* YOU!

NO, YOU CAME HERE FOR A *STORY*... AND I'M IN THE MOOD TO TELL IT!

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO *LIKE* IT, THOUGH.

OR, PERHAPS *YOU* WILL, JAVI... BUT NOT YOUR COMPANIONS.

IT'S BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT *NOBODY* LIKES IT WHEN *GOD*—

—IS A *FRAUD*.

"OUR TALE BEGINS TEN THOUSAND YEARS AGO, ON A LITTLE PLANET WE USED TO CALL *EARTH*..."

"IT WAS A NICE LITTLE WORLD FILLED WITH NICE LITTLE PEOPLE... BUT I WAS NOT ONE OF THEM.

"I WAS SERVING SEVERAL THOUSAND CONSECUTIVE *LIFE SENTENCES* DUE TO MY SPECTACULARLY MISANTHROPIC WAYS.

DETENTION MODULE J-31

"YOU SEE, I WAS THE WORLD'S LEADING AUTHORITY ON [illegible] MATTER/ENERGY CONVERSION, BIO-ENERGY SYSTEMS AND [illegible] PARALLEL QUANTUM REALITIES.

"I MADE BILLIONS APPLYING MY THEORIES TO WEAPONS SYSTEMS, UP UNTIL I [illegible] SABOTAGED MY OWN BIO-IMPLODER TEST AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY.

"[illegible] GOOD TIMES...

"*JAILING* ME FOR MASS MURDER WAS EASY. *REPLACING* ME WAS IMPOSSIBLE.

"SO IN EXCHANGE FOR BETTER CONDITIONS, THEY LET ME KEEP UP MY WORK IN A SPECIAL *LAB*, CONTINUING TO DESIGN LITTLE HORRORS FOR THE *GOVERNMENT*."

DOCTOR NATHAN APPOLYON? I'M PROFESSOR *ROBERT CHARON* OF THE TERRAGOV ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY

I, uh NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT *VISITORS*

I'M SURPRISED YOU'RE WILLING TO *TOUCH* ME..

I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR CRIMINAL RECORD. I'VE READ YOUR *PSYCH* FILES, TOO

FIGURE AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT ARMED, WE CAN JUST TALK AS FELLOW *SCIENTISTS*. FAIR ENOUGH?

WHAT DO YOU *WANT* FROM ME?

FRANKLY, DOCTOR, I NEED YOUR UNIQUE *EXPERTISE* AND WHAT I HAVE TO *SHARE* WITH YOU IS SOMETHING YOU WILL *NOT* WANT TO MISS

TAKE A LITTLE *TRIP* WITH ME, AND YOU'LL *SEE* WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT

THAT IS, IF YOU'RE NOT AVERSE TO STEPPING OUTSIDE THESE WALLS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN *TEN YEARS*?

WELCOME TO *ATLANTIS*, DOCTOR APPOLYON *THE* ATLANTIS IT S *REAL*

APPARENTLY, *SOMEONE* DISCOVERED IT WAY BACK IN THE TWENTY SEVENTH CENTURY. THEN *CLOAKED* IT WHEN THE EUGENICS WARS BROKE OUT

THE CLOAKING FIELD BROKE DOWN LAST YEAR, AND SUDDENLY A MAJOR CITY STATE JUST *APPEARED* ON THE ATLANTIC FLOOR ARRAY

WE'VE KEPT THE EXISTENCE OF ATLANTIS *SECRET* FROM THE GENERAL POPULATION

TERRAGOV WANTS TO *UNDERSTAND* WHAT WE'VE FOUND BEFORE REVEALING TO THE HUMAN RACE THAT *ANOTHER* HUMAN RACE PRECEEDED IT

WHICH BRINGS US TO *MY* JOB. I'M IN *CHARGE* OF THIS DIG

A LOT OF IT IS WHAT YOU MIGHT *EXPECT* FROM A PREHISTORIC CIVILIZATION, BUT SOME OF THIS STUFF DEFIES EXPLANATION

ARE THOSE *COFFINS*? HOW DID THEY PRESERVE THE BODIES SO WELL?

THEY'RE *STASIS* PODS THOSE PEOPLE ARE STILL *ALIVE*

DON'T ASK ME *HOW*

I TRIED TO *REVIVE* A COUPLE BUT JUST ENDED UP *KILLING* THEM

SO, I GUESS YOU'RE NOT THE *ONLY* MAN OF SCIENCE WITH BLOOD ON HIS HANDS

DON'T YOU *DARE* EQUATE OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, PROFESSSOR

YOU KILLED BY ACCIDENT *I* KILLED BY METICULOUS, MAGNIFICENT *DESIGN*

SOMETHIN' *THE MATTER?*

WE'RE *FINE*, SERGEANT KRYZORR THANK YOU

YOU'RE *RIGHT*, APPOLYON WE *AREN'T* THE SAME AT ALL

IN FACT, THAT'S WHY YOU'RE *HERE*

FROM WHAT I'VE DECIPHERED, MOST OF THE ATLANTEAN POPULATION *DEPARTED* ONE DAY IN A MASS RITUAL THEY CALLED "*TRANSITION*."

IF I INTERPRET CORRECTLY, IT WAS A MEANS OF *TRANSMUTATION* TO A HIGHER ENERGY STATE.

I BELIEVE THEY *ASCENDED* TO A PARALLEL QUANTUM REALITY--WHICH IS SOMETHING I DON'T UNDERSTAND

BUT *YOU* DO

"HOW COULD I *RESIST* SUCH A PUZZLE?

"HAD SOME ANCIENT CULTURE *REALLY* ACCOMPLISHED WHAT THREE HUNDRED-AND-FIRST CENTURY TECHNOLOGY COULD NOT?

"STUDIES OF THE TWO DEAD ATLANTEANS REVEALED THAT THEY WERE ESSENTIALLY HUMAN, WITH A KEY *GENETIC* DIFFERENCE.

"WE POSTULATED THAT THEIR GENE SEQUENCE HAD SOMEHOW GIVEN THEM ABILITIES THAT WERE TO US JUST THE STUFF OF FANTASY.

"WE COULDN'T AWAKEN THE OTHER ATLANTEANS, NOR COULD WE RECREATE THEIR GENETIC GIFTS."

"PROFESSOR CHARON AND I MADE IT OUR MISSION TO FIND OUT.

"BUT I *COULD* MIMIC THE ASTONISHING PHYSICS BEHIND THEIR ABILITIES THROUGH *ARTIFICIAL* MEANS.

"AND WITH THE FUNDING AND MANPOWER OF THE TERRAGOV INDUSTRIAL-MILITARY COMPLEX, WE BUILT MY MASTERPIECE: THE *TRANSITION DEVICE*."

"AT LAST, THE TIME CAME TO *TEST* IT. TERRAGOV SELECTED A SPECIAL *MILITARY* TEAM TO UNDERGO THE INITIAL EXPOSURE.

"IF ALL WENT AS I PROMISED, THESE VOLUNTEERS WOULD BE THE FIRST MODERN HUMANS TO FOLLOW THE ATLANTEANS TO WHAT WE SECRETLY HOPED WAS HEAVEN ITSELF.

"THE GOVERNMENT OBSERVERS WERE UNDERSTANDABLY *NERVOUS* ABOUT MY PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT, BUT CHARON HAD CHECKED MY WORK EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

"WE COULD NEVER HAVE COMPLETED THE DEVICE WITHOUT EACH OTHER'S KNOWLEDGE. HE REASSURED THEM ALL WAS WELL.

"THE THRILL OF A MOMENTOUS, PARADIGM-SHIFTING DISCOVERY HAD FORGED BETWEEN US AN ODD FRIENDSHIP OF SORTS.

"IN HIS OWN CAUTIOUS WAY, CHARON *TRUSTED* ME.

"THEN AGAIN, SO HAD THE COMMANDANT OF THE NAVAL ACADEMY PROVING GROUNDS."

"THE UNIFORMS I HAD DESIGNED FOR CHARON AND MYSELF WERE SUPPOSED TO *SHIELD* US FROM THE MACHINE'S EFFECTS.

"IN FACT, I MADE SURE THEY *CONCENTRATED* THE EMPOWERING ENERGIES.

"THE TRANSITION DEVICE WAS DESIGNED TO PROJECT ITS TRANSFORMATIONAL ENERGIES TO A RADIUS OF ONE HUNDRED YARDS.

"MY LITTLE *AMPLIFIER ORB* EXTENDED THAT RANGE AROUND THE GLOBE."

"RATHER THAN CROSSING OVER A FEW AT A TIME, THE HUMAN RACE WAS GOING TO ASCEND TO GODHOOD ALL TOGETHER--WITH CHARON AND I LEADING THE WAY.

"THE *FARTHER* PEOPLE WERE FROM THE SOURCE OF THE TRANSITION WAVE... THE *LESS* POWER THEY HAD WHEN THEY EMERGED ON THE OTHER SIDE.

"OF COURSE, AS YOU WELL KNOW, WE *DIDN'T* ARRIVE ANYWHERE NEAR HEAVEN. INSTEAD, WE WERE FLUNG INTO THE UNIVERSE YOU PEOPLE KNOW AS *NEGATION SPACE*."

THE *REST* OF THE STORY, I BELIEVE YOU ALREADY KNOW.

CHARON ENDED UP WITH SLIGHTLY *MORE* POWER THAN I HAD WHEN I FELL FROM FAVOR WITH HIM. HE BANISHED ME *HERE*.

I'VE MADE THE *BEST* OF IT. "BETTER TO RULE IN HELL THAN TO SERVE IN HEAVEN", AND ALL THAT...

BUT OUR *GOD*--

--IS NO GOD AT ALL.

HE'S JUST A GUY NAMED BOB.

JAVI, I AM AWARE THAT CHARON STEERED YOU HERE TO DISCOVER MY *PLANS* AGAINST HIM AND PUT AN *END* TO THEM.

NO. WE *CHOSE* TO COME -

THAT'S WHAT HE *LET* YOU THINK. TRUST ME.

HE KNEW YOU'D BE BETTER *MOTIVATED* IF YOU THOUGHT YOU CAME OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL.

I, ON THE OTHER HAND, *WILL* ALLOW YOU TO CHOOSE.

I RE-CREATED *THIS* LITTLE JEWEL, GUARANTEED TO *RID* YOU OF FALSE GODS, OR YOUR MONEY BACK.

I WANNA TAKE IT *BACK* WITH YOU AND GIVE BIG BLUE A LITTLE *SURPRISE*...?

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5 of 5
AUG

MARK of CHARON

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Far beyond the most distant stars in the sky there exists a separate universe -- a dark dimension of evil and oppression. This chaotic cosmos is ruled by the mighty Negation Empire and its godlike sovereign:

CHARON

Javi Cobian was a doctor on a peaceful world who led a quiet existence until he was marked by the mysterious Sigil. This strange symbol on his forearm unleashed within him superhuman healing abilities... *and* it made him the target of Negation operatives who kidnapped Javi for further study.

Javi escaped, but his bid for freedom was cut tragically short when he was struck down by a Negation Lawbringer. Brought back from the grave by Charon's power, Javi was reluctantly placed in charge of the Emperor's newest enforcers -- an alien strike team empowered by Charon's own version of the Sigil.

Javi led the vicious Tihian, the mighty Breous, the telepathic Trocantor, and the teleporter, Shrakti to a hellish nether-plane of the Negation Universe where they encountered Charon's greatest enemy -- Appolyon. They learned from this diabolical entity the truth of Charon's origins, and received from him a device designed to destroy the Negation Emperor. But will Javi's team allow him to assassinate the Supreme Being of their universe?

Mark of Charon™ Vol. 1 Issue 5, AUGUST 2003 FIRST PRINTING Published by CrossGen Comics, LLC Office of publication 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar Florida 34677 **CrossGen® CrossGen Comics® CrossGeneration®** and the **CrossGen Sigil®** are registered trademarks of CrossGen Intellectual Property LLC **Mark of Charon™** and all prominent characters and images are Trademark and Copyright 2003 CrossGen Intellectual Property LLC ALL RIGHTS RESERVED The stories incidents and characters in this publication are fictional Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental With the exception of artwork used for review purposes none of the contents of this book may be reproduced in any form without the express written consent of CrossGen Comics, LLC PRINTED IN CANADA

IT WAS BACK AT THE CHURCH OF DEDITION THAT I WAS INTRODUCED TO THE CONCEPT OF THE "DEVIL'S BARGAIN"

AND, PLEASED BY THE WORLD HE CREATED, THE LORD PLACED UPON IT THE FIRST MAN AND THE FIRST WOMAN

FIRST MAN TOOK FIRST WOMAN FOR HIS WIFE, AND TOGETHER THEY LIVED IN A LAND OF PLENTY--

--AND THE ONLY THING REQUIRED OF THEM WAS THAT THEY LIVE IN SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF ALMIGHTY GOD

"ONE DAY GOD'S ADVERSARY CAME TO THEM AND QUESTIONED WHY THEY MUST BEND TO GOD'S UNFATHOMABLE WHIM

"THE PRINCE OF LIES TOLD THEM THAT THEY COULD BE GOD'S EQUAL IF THEY DARED PARTAKE OF THE SEED OF POWER

"AT FIRST THEY REFUSED, BUT THE DARK ONE'S ARGUMENT WAS SO WELL REASONED THAT THE FIRST MAN AND WOMAN WERE SOON CONVINCED TO THWART THE WILL OF THE LORD

"THEY HAD BEEN INFECTED WITH THE FALLEN ONE'S OWN GREATEST SIN PRIDE AND THEIR FATE WAS SEALED."

I HAD LONG SINCE TURNED MY BACK ON THE CHURCH OF DEDITION AND ACCEPTED THAT THERE IS NO GOD IN THIS CRUEL AND SENSELESS LIFE

BUT HERE FACED WITH THE NEXT BEST THING TO THE FALLEN ONE, SUDDENLY THE OLD MYTHS AND ICONS LOOMED LARGER THAN EVER

THIS IS A VERSION OF THE *ENERGY AMPLIFIER* I USED TEN THOUSAND YEARS AGO TO TRANSFORM CHARON AND MYSELF INTO CREATURES OF UNPARALLELED POWER.

YOU'VE HEARD THE TALE: CHARON SET HIMSELF UP AS A *FALSE GOD* TO EVERY SENTIENT CREATURE IN THIS UNIVERSE.

HE THINKS HE IS *SAFE* FROM ME. HE THINKS *NO ONE* CAN CHALLENGE THE FANTASY OF HIS DIVINITY.

USE THIS AGAINST HIM, JAVI, AND FREE THE UNIVERSE FROM A "GOD" THEY NEVER WANTED.

CLEARLY, THIS WAS A DEVIL'S BARGAIN, AND IT WOULD COST ME DEARLY IN THE END

NO WAY I COULD TRUST THIS GUY -HE WAS A DOUBLE-CROSSING SOCIOPATH EVEN BEFORE FATE GRANTED HIM COSMIC POWER

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ONLY REASON I'D ACCEPTED COMMAND OF CHARON'S NEW SUPER SOLDIERS WAS IN THE HOPE OF FINDING A WEAPON AGAINST HIM

AND HERE WAS THE WEAPON -- TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

I KNEW YOU WOULDN'T LACK RESOLVE.

EXCUSE ME, LORD APPOLYON

IF THIS WEAPON REALLY *CAN* HURT THE EMPEROR WHY HAVEN'T *YOU* USED IT AGAINST HIM YOURSELF?

I SUPPOSE I *COULD* FIND A WAY PAST THE *BARRIER* CHARON ERECTED TO CONTAIN ME ON THIS PLANE...

...BUT THE MOMENT I APPEAR IN NEGATION SPACE HE WILL *SENSE* IT.

AND THEN EVERY STARSHIP AND LAWBRINGER IN THE *UNIVERSE* WILL STAND BETWEEN US.

FAR BETTER IF HE DOESN'T SEE THIS COMING UNTIL IT'S *TOO LATE.*

NOW, BE A DEAR AND OPEN A PORTAL *BACK* TO YOUR UNIVERSE?

VORP

ON YOUR WORD, WE'RE JUST SUPPOSED TO GO BACK HOME AND ASSASSINATE *GOD?*

THINK ABOUT IT, MY SCALY FRIEND.

YOU WILL NEVER FIND THE *TRUE* GOD AS LONG AS THAT BLUE *IMPOSTOR* STANDS IN THE WAY!

ASTONISHING [illegible]

[illegible] DEPARTURE [illegible]

VIP

SHUT UP, TROCANTOR! HOW CAN YOU BE SO *TRIVIAL* AFTER WHAT JUST HAPPENED?! DON'T YOU *GET* IT?!

WE HAVE JUST CONSPIRED WITH THE *ANTI-GOD*--HE WHOSE NAME MUST NEVER BE *SPOKEN!*

IT MAY ALREADY BE *TOO LATE* FOR ANY OF US!

YOU MAY HAVE *DAMNED* US FOR ALL ETERNITY SIMPLY BY LEADING US TO THAT PLACE!

MY *WHOLE* LIFE I'VE SERVED CHARON LOVED HIM

NOW IT FEELS LIKE THERE IS A *STAIN* ON MY SOUL THAT CAN NEVER BE REMOVED

YOU TALK ABOUT HIM LIKE HE'S A *KIND* AND *LOVING* GOD AND MAYBE THAT'S WHAT CHARON LIKES TO *THINK* HE IS, BUT

BUT HE'S *NOT!*

TAKE A GOOD LOOK! *THIS* IS WHAT CHARON BRINGS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE NEGATION!

HOW CAN YOU LOVE A GOD THAT ASKS *THIS* OF HIS PEOPLE?!

THESE PEOPLE *REBELLED!*

AND THE EMPEROR *STILL* GAVE THEM ONE LAST CHANCE BY SENDING *US* TO QUELL THEM! IF *ANYONE* FAILED THESE PEOPLE IT WAS *US!*

CHARON SET US UP TO *FAIL*. HIS PRECIOUS EMPIRE DOES THIS TO PEOPLE *EVERYWHERE*, ALL THE TIME

IF YOU EVEN THINK THIS IS AN *ISOLATED* INCIDENT

TROCANTOR? READ MY *MEMORIES*. YOU GETTING THESE IMAGES?

GOOD. FORWARD THEM TO *SHRAKT!*

SHRAKTI, OPEN A PORTAL TO THE FIRST LOCATION YOU SEE IN YOUR MIND

VOOP

GOT IT

COME ON, BREVUS, T'BIAN

LET'S *SEE* THE GREAT WORKS OF YOUR DIVINE

THIS WAS MY *PRISON* WHEN I WAS FIRST KIDNAPPED BY THE NEGATION

SEE HOW MANY INMATES WEREN'T ABLE TO ESCAPE LIKE I DID?

THIS WAS THE NEGATION OUTPOST ON THE FIRST WORLD WE VISITED AFTER WE ESCAPED

I GUESS YOUR BENEVOLENT GOD MUST'VE PUNISHED THE LOCALS FOR FAILING TO *RECAPTURE* US.

AND *THAT* IS WHERE I WAS *BURIED* AFTER ONE OF CHARON'S ANGELS OF MERCY PUT A HOLE RIGHT THROUGH MY *CHEST*

STARTING TO GET THE *PICTURE?*

R.I.P.
JAVI
WU PING LAM
M'SCHELL
AGLAREB
QUOLZAG
HARVEY

THIS IS ALL SO... *BIASED.* YOU'RE INTENTIONALLY SHOWING US PLACES YOU *KNOW* WILL CAST A BAD LIGHT ON THE NEGATION

IT'S *ALL* BAD, TIBIAN BUT IF YOU THINK I'VE STACKED THE DECK, WHY DON'T *YOU* CHOOSE OUR NEXT DESTINATION?

VOOP

YOU SEE? THIS IS MY HOMEWORLD, WHERE FAITH IN THE EMPEROR IS *REWARDED* BY

ALL OF YOU -- *OUTSIDE! NOW!*

LINE UP NEXT TO THE *TRENCH!*

WHAT'S *GOING ON* HERE?!

DID *SECTOR COM* SEND YOU? I *TOLD* THE GENERAL WE DIDN'T NEED GROUND-SUPPORT!

WE'RE HERE ON OUR OWN WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*

CARRYING OUT ORDERS!

THE EMPEROR WANTS A TENTH OF THE POPULATION DEAD BY SUNDOWN SOMEONE GOT ON HIS BAD SIDE..!

NOW GET OUT OF THE WAY WE HAVE WORK TO DO!

NO! I HAVE SEEN THE EMPEROR! HE COULDN'T HAVE ORDERED THIS!

WHY ARE YOU KILLING MY PEOPLE?!

WHY?!

NEGATION TROOPS DON'T DEPLOY WITHOUT ORDERS

ALL RIGHT JAVI I'M CONVINCED

SHRRKRAK

SO IS TIBIAN, BY THE LOOKS OF IT

TROCANTOR CAN YOU, Y'KNOW *MINDLOCK* ALL THE SOLDIERS?

FREEZE THEM IN PLACE?

ALL OF THEM!

shuff-shuff-shuff-JAVI?

YOU shuff-READY TO

USE THAT shuff-LITTLE BALL?

MY LORD! GRAVE NEWS FROM PLANET NARGO!

I KNOW, CAPTAIN.

THE WHOLE *REASON* I SENT A DECIMATION BRIGADE THERE IN THE *FIRST* PLACE WAS TO HAVE THEM CONFRONT MY *SIGIL-BEARERS.*

THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES *EXACTLY* AS I PLANNED.

BUT, *FATHER*—! YOU *GRANTED* THOSE TRAITORS THE POWER THEY USE *AGAINST* YOU!

YOU *MARKED* THEM WITH YOUR HOLY *SEAL!*

WE *CANNOT* STAND BY WHILE THEY *MOVE AGAINST* YOU!

PATIENCE, CHILD. MY *"LIGIS"* EXPERIMENT IS ENTERING ITS *FINAL PHASE*, RIGHT ON SCHEDULE.

JAVI AND HIS TEAM WILL COME *HERE* SOON, AND THEY WILL BE HOSTILE. I DON'T WANT ANY OF *YOU* AROUND FOR THAT.

IT MIGHT GET OUT OF HAND.

THE *IMPERIAL GUARD* WILL PROVIDE SOME TOKEN RESISTANCE FOR THEM, BUT NOTHING TOO OVERWHELMING.

HALT! YOU ARE COMMITTING AN *UNSCHEDULED, UNAUTHORIZED* ENTRY!

COME QUIETLY, OR YOU'RE ALL *MEAT!*

VOOSH

SERGEANT ? AREN'T THOSE THE EMPEROR'S NEW-

ZIP IT CORPORAL!

SQUAD! PREPARE TO FIRE!

READY AM

SHRAKTI?

ON IT

VOOSH

CHOOM

CHOOM

CHOOM

CHOOM

CHOOM

FIRE!

=unngh=

ARRGH--!

=whung=

=kgh-kk=

ZARK

ZARK

ZARK

ZARK

ZARK

KORP

THE THRONE ROOM'S THIS WAY! MOVE IT!

THEY'LL CONCENTRATE RESISTANCE AT THE *GATE!* DON'T LET THEM BREAK OUR *MOMENTUM!*

HALT! TRAITORS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THE EMPEROR'S PRESENCE!

ANY *MORE FINAL* WORDS?

NO?

GOOD

KROOM

AH, MY GUESTS HAVE ARRIVED. TIME FOR YOU TO GO.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, I MUST HANDLE MYSELF.

BUT, FATHER...

ONE MORE SHOULD DO IT

KROOM

KROOM

YOU SET US UP ON A *SUICIDE MISSION.* DIDN'T YOU?

YOU *KNEW* I'D SEEK OUT YOUR *ENEMY*—AND YOU FIGURED APPOLYON WOULD *KILL* US WHEN WE FOUND HIM!

WHY?! WHY PUT SO MUCH *EFFORT* INTO US, ONLY TO THROW US AWAY?

YOU ARE *CLOSE* TO THE TRUTH, JAVI; BUT YOU STILL CANNOT FATHOM MY INTENTIONS.

YEAH, YEAH THE MIND OF *GOD* IS A BOOK WE'RE NOT MEANT TO READ, RIGHT?

TROCANTOR START FLIPPING SOME *PAGES*

IS IT WORKING?

AM I IN CONTROL

YOU OVERPLAYED YOUR HAND, JAVI. I'D HOPED KAINE HAD TAUGHT YOU BETTER TACTICS.

I CAN REINFORCE HIM! I'LL GIVE HIM AS MUCH POWER AS IT TAKES!

JAVI, JAVI, JAVI...

THE ONLY WAY YOU PEOPLE WILL UNDERSTAND HOW OUT OF YOUR DEPTH YOU ARE—

--IS TO SEE THIS CONFRONTATION THROUGH TROCANTOR'S EYES...

!

ughh

unnnnhh.

AND THEN WE ALL KNEW WHAT HE KNEW AND FELT WHAT HE FELT

THE TRILLIONS OF SOULS ON COUNTLESS WORLDS FROM ONE END OF SPACETIME TO THE OTHER

ALL OF CREATION ON BENDED KNEE, IN REVERENCE TO THIS ONE BEING, THIS SMILING VILLAIN

THIS GOD INCARNATE WHO FOR SOME REASON CHOSE ME OUT OF THE TEAMING MULTITUDES AS HIS PLAYTHING, HIS SCIENCE PROJECT

I WAS AT ONCE HUMBLED AND EXALTED

AND I KNEW WE COULD NEVER HOPE TO BRING CHARON DOWN OURSELVES.

THE MIND OF GOD WAS A TOUGHER READ THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR, EH?

Ohhh

WE DO NOT DESERVE FORGIVENESS

HOW COULD WE EVER HAVE QUESTIONED YOU ?

WELL, JAVI? WHAT ABOUT YOU?

shuff shuff

fuh FORG VE

I STILL HAVE APPOLYON S ORB CAN IT POSSIBLY BE ENOUGH ?

ONLY ONE WAY TO FIND OUT

CAN YOU FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT I AM?

SO THIS IS IT THIS IS HOW I'M GOING TO DIE

I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT APPOLYON'S WEAPON WILL DO. BUT IF IT'S ENOUGH TO KILL CHARON I'M QUITE SURE I WON'T SURVIVE IT

THIS IS THE PRICE OF MY DEVIL'S BARGAIN

IT'S A RELIEF JUST KNOWING THAT THE RUNNING AND THE FIGHTING AND THE EVER-PRESENT TERROR WILL ALL SOON BE OVER.

WAS THERE EVER A TIME WHEN I DIDN'T FEEL AS IF THE WHOLE WORLD WAS COLLAPSING IN UPON ME?

YES. THERE WAS...

...BACK WHEN I WAS INNOCENT ENOUGH TO BELIEVE IN GOD'S INHERENT GOODNESS...

...BACK WHEN I SUBMITTED WITHOUT QUESTION TO HIS DIVINE WILL...

...BACK WHEN YOU HAD SENSE ENOUGH TO *KNOW* GOD WHEN YOU *SAW* HIM.

HOW DID YOU...?

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GO ON AND *KILL* ME!

I...

I CAN'T

THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR.

YES, LORD. HE SAID IT WOULD--

WAIT!

KLIK

=AZIA= ROBERT CHARON! AS I LIVE AND BREATHE! HERE'S YOUR *HOLY HIT-SQUAD* BACK.

I SUPPOSE YOU EXPECTED ME TO *DESTROY* THEM. BUT I DID FAR *BETTER* THAN THAT!

I TURNED THEM *AGAINST* YOU, BOBBY C! I GOT THEM TO *RENOUNCE* THEIR SO-CALLED *GOD!*

THEY THINK THIS *ORB* IS A BOMB, OR A WEAPON. THEY'RE PROBABLY PRETTY *SHOCKED* RIGHT NOW--IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY *EXECUTED* THEM. THAT IS!

THEY'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT THIS *IS* A BOMB--A *METAPHYSICAL* ONE.

I'VE *PROVEN* THAT THEIR FAITH IN YOU CAN BE *BROKEN*. AND *THAT* IS THE START OF YOUR *DOWNFALL*.

BETTER LUCK *NEXT TIME*, BOB... =AZIA=

ACTUALLY, I'M QUITE SATISFIED WITH *THIS* RESULT.

YOU FIVE WERE PUT TO THE ULTIMATE *TEST*...

...AND YOU *PASSED*.

RISE, JAVI.

I HAD TO KNOW IF THE PEOPLE IN YOUR UNIVERSE COULD ONE DAY BE *TRUE* MEMBERS OF THE NEGATION.

I AM CERTAIN MY FORCES WILL PREVAIL IN THE INVASION, BUT I HAD TO KNOW IF YOUR PEOPLE COULD ACCEPT ME IN THEIR HEARTS AS THEIR ONE TRUE MASTER.

YOU HAVE PROVEN THEY *CAN*.

YOU DID NOT *USE* APPOLYON'S FALSE WEAPON.

YOU *SURRENDERED* IT, BECAUSE YOU *ACCEPTED* WHAT I AM!

AND NOW YOUR SOUL FINALLY KNOWS *PEACE* THAT NOT EVEN THE *GRAVE* COULD BRING YOU!

THANK YOU, JAVI. I CAN NOW *FULLY MOBILIZE* MY INVASION FLEET, CONFIDENT OF OUR INEVITABLE *SUCCESS*...

...BUT REGARDLESS OF WHEN AND WHERE THAT LAST BATTLE IS FOUGHT AND YOUR UNIVERSE VANQUISHED, THE *REAL* VICTORY WAS WON HERE *TODAY*.

THE REAL VICTORY...WAS *YOU*.

GOOD OR EVIL? RIGHT OR WRONG? WHO KNOWS ANYMORE?

I'LL LEAVE IT UP TO GOD TO DECIDE. I'LL LEAVE IT UP TO CHARON.

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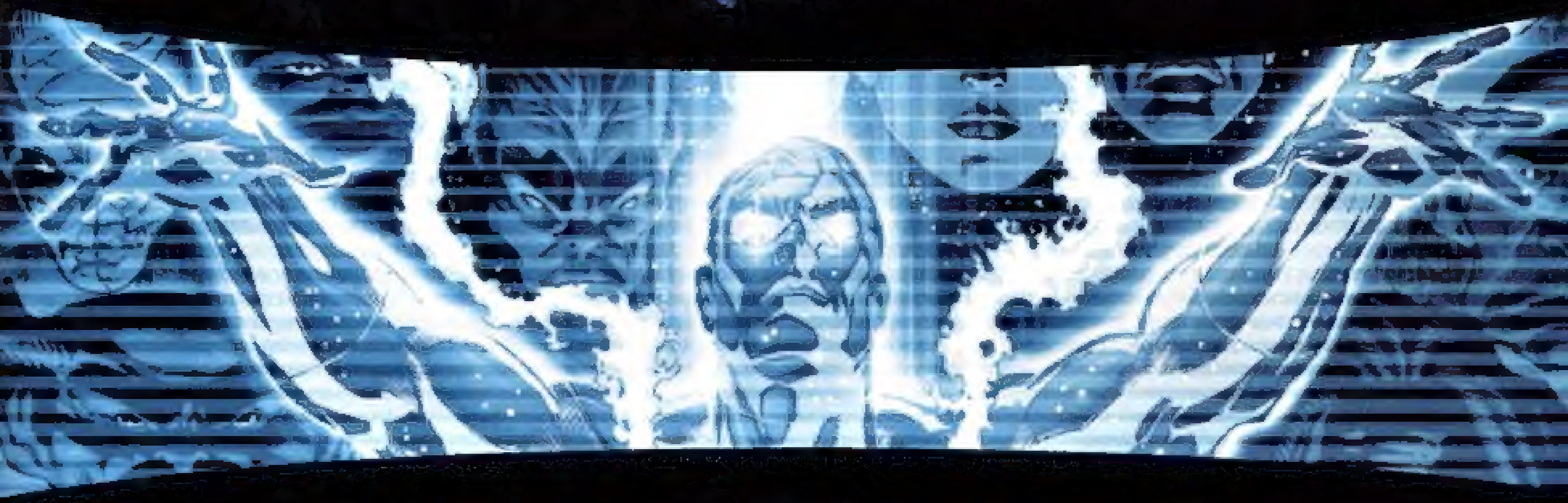

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